

December 9, 2015

An additional meeting of the New Richmond Utility Commission was held on December 9, 2015 at 7:30 a.m. at the Civic Center. There will be no regular scheduled meeting in January of 2016.

Pat Becker called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Members Present: Jerry Frey, Bob Mullen, Gerry Warner, and Pat Becker.

A motion was made by Bob Mullen to approve the agenda, seconded by Gerry Warner, and carried.

A motion was made by Gerry Warner to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2015 meeting, seconded by Jerry Frey, and carried.

Public Comment – None

Closed session per State Statute 19.81 (1)(c)(f):

A motion was made to go into closed session by Gerry Warner, seconded by Jerry Frey, and carried.

Approval of 2016 Budgets, Wages and Salaries:

Mike Darrow discussed outcomes and recommendations of the Employee Suggestion Program and cost savings for 2015. A two percent wage increase was approved by the Utility Commission for utility employees. This will be done in a split, with one percent going into affect January 1, 2016 and the additional one percent on July 1, 2016. Nancy Petersen presented an overview of the proposed 2016 Electric, Water, and Sewer Budgets. A motion was made by Gerry Warner to approve the Electric, Water, and Sewer Operating Budgets for fiscal year 2016, seconded by Jerry Frey, and carried.

Department Reports:

Bob Meyer, Water Superintendent:

Bob gave a brief review of the DNR Water System Inspection. Stated the inspection went well. There was also some discussion on well abandonment.

Steve Skinner, Lead Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator:

An underground wire pull was done to repair a piece of equipment at the WWTP. Loans relating to West Central Biosolids Facility were paid in 2015, resulting in lower expenses for the WWTP in 2016. Dave Pufall and Steve Skinner passed their lab testing certification, enabling them to do in house lab testing. With the exception of a few lab tests, all lab tests will now be done at the WWTP.

Tom Rickard, Electric Superintendent:

Due to the extended fall weather, the Electric Department was able to stay on top of projects and well situated to go into the winter months. December is a transition month. The Electric Department will be working on inventory, and tree trimming. Mike Strey is focusing on the LED light conversion.

Jeremiah Wendt, Director of Public Works:

Every three years, a Water Systems Inspection is done by the DNR. The inspection was completed on December 8, 2015. The Water Department will be receiving a letter in December summarizing recommendations and issues that need to be addressed. Upon receipt of the letter, a response to those recommendations needs to be drafted, and submitted to the DNR within 45 days. Two open houses were held for the Paperjack Drive project. This project includes some sewer relocation. An open house will be held in December for the North Shore Drive project. Utility work included in this project is minimal. In January an open house will be held for the projects on East and West River Drive, and N Starr Ave. These projects focus more on utility upgrades. Jeremiah announced that Pat Howell passed the Groundwater and Distribution Operator test.

Nancy Petersen, Finance Director:

A conference call with WPPI was held to determine how to set up the utility billing software to calculate the credit for solar panel usage. Starting with the first pay period in December, New Richmond Utilities, along with the City of New Richmond, will be outsourcing payroll. Going forward, Paychex will be processing payroll. Currently a lot of time is being spent compiling the necessary documentation Paychex needs to process payroll, along with the verification process to confirm all data entered is accurate.

Weston Arndt, WPPI Energy Services Rep:

Community Solar Update

Individual outreach and meetings have been underway with area businesses and non-profit organizations. These have been successful and will continue through December and into January. The highlight of the visits was Westfields Hospital's commitment for 40 shares.

Through WPPI Energy Community Contribution funds, we randomly selected three non-profit organizations in the community to receive a panel. The awardees are:

The Alano Society of New Richmond

The Heritage Center

St Thomas Episcopal Church

A letter to the editor was submitted to this week's New Richmond News from Mike Darrow discussing the community solar, the efforts thus far, and a challenge to subscribe more shares than the River Falls project. River Falls will also issue a letter to the River Falls Journal.

Holiday Light Exchange

We're again running the holiday light exchange, in partnership with the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM). RAM offers jobs and services to disabled workers, making the partnership a win-win. We will collect strands at the Utility office through January.

Mike Darrow, Utility Manager:

The WPPI Contract Extension is scheduled to be formally approved by the City Council in February. The next Utility Commission meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2016 at 7:30a.m.

Communications and miscellaneous correspondence – None

There being no further business, a motion was made by Gerry Warner to adjourn, seconded by Bob Mullen, and carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:48 a.m.

Pat Becker, President

Gerry Warner, Secretary